

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, ranking members Kissel and Fishbein and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Nicole Heath, and I am from Greenwich, Connecticut and am a Board member of CT Against Gun Violence. I am testifying in favor of HB-6355, An Act Concerning Risk Protection Orders.

After losing my only sibling to suicide with a handgun, I have been committed to promoting legislative ways to reduce the likelihood of a suicidal person having access to a handgun. ERPOs are effective because, as was the case with my brother, people who are legally able to purchase a gun, can be dangerous to themselves or others.

Fortunately, he was only a danger to himself. There should be a legal way for those of us who care about a loved one to see that our loved ones are protected from themselves. Had an ERPO law been in place when my brother took his own life, my parents and I or his psychiatrist could have removed that gun from his apartment, and my parents might not have had that middle of the night call from the police asking if they were the parents of my 31 year old brother. As a mother of a son myself, I more fully understand the importance of a tool like that of our proposed ERPO law. I know that 2/3 of all hand gun deaths in our state are suicides. I would like to prevent an avoidable loss for other parents and siblings so they never have to experience the indescribable pain that a call like that represented for my parents, and ultimately for me, his younger sister.

I ask that you favorably report HB-6355 out of committee so that the General Assembly can vote to strengthen our Extreme Risk Protection law so that it works harder to prevent firearm suicide and homicide. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Nicole P. Heath, Greenwich, CT